IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. An identifier indicating the status of each claim is provided.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A data storage system having a plurality of terminal apparatuses of users connected with a data storage unit of a service provider via a computer network, said data storage unit storing data from inside said terminal apparatuses so that the stored data are subsequently used by said users, said data storage unit comprising:

connecting means for connecting said data storage unit of said service provider with one or more terminal apparatuses associated with each of said users via said computer network independently of types of said terminal apparatuses;

file storing means for allocating to each one of said users a user area of a predetermined size in which to store data from inside the respective terminal apparatus of a disclosing user <s>in question</s>;

file managing means for managing the data being stored in said file storing means; <s>and</s>

data format converting means for automatically determining the type of terminal apparatus of a requesting user that is other than the disclosing user <s>in question</s> and for performing a data format converting process;

announcing means for announcing that the data for which use conditions have been set are usable by the users other than said disclosing user who stored data into said file storing means; and

intercepting means for establishing interception of the announcement from the disclosing user either in response to a request from the requesting user before said announcement, or after said announcement,

wherein, in response to a use request from ~~any user~~the requesting user other than the disclosing user ~~in question~~, said data format converting means automatically converts stored data of the disclosing user ~~in question~~ into a format compatible with the type of the terminal apparatus used by the requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~ for connection to the system, the converted data being used by said terminal apparatus through which said requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~ has sent said use request, and

wherein the disclosing user ~~in question~~ can prohibit the automatic conversion of the stored data of the disclosing user ~~in question~~ into a format compatible with the type of terminal apparatus used by the requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~.

2.  (Currently Amended)          A data storage system according to claim 1, further comprising data disclosure controlling means to enable each disclosing user to manage the use conditions under which the respective stored data in said data storing means are allowed to be used;

wherein said data disclosure controlling means enables the data for which said use conditions have been set by each disclosing user to be used by requesting users other than the disclosing user who stored the data ~~in question~~ into said ~~data~~ file storing means.

3.  (Canceled).

4. (Currently Amended)     A data storage system according to claim [[3]]2, wherein said announcing means makes the announcement to a specific user other than said disclosing user who stored the data in question into said data file storing means.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended)     A data storage system according to claim 2, further comprising recording means for recording settings of said use conditions and a history of uses by the other requesting users of the data for which said use conditions have been set.

7. (Currently Amended)     A data storage system having a plurality of terminal apparatuses of users connected with a data storage unit of a service provider via a computer network, said data storage unit storing data from inside said terminal apparatuses so that the stored data are subsequently used by said users, said data storage unit comprising:

a connecting device configured to connect said data storage unit of said service provider with one or more terminal apparatuses associated with each of said users via said computer network independently of types of said terminal apparatuses;

a file storing device configured to allocate to each one of said users a user area of a predetermined size in which to store data from inside the respective terminal apparatus of a disclosing user in question;

a file managing device configured to manage the data being stored in said file storing device; and

a data format converting device configured to automatically determine the type of terminal apparatus of a requesting user that is other than the disclosing user ~~in question~~ and for performing a data format converting process; and

an announcing device configured to announce that the data for which use conditions have been set are usable by the users other than said disclosing user who stored data into said file storing device; and

an intercepting device configured to intercept the announcement from the disclosing user either in response to a request from the requesting user before said announcement, or after said announcement,

wherein, in response to a use request from ~~any user~~the requesting user other than the disclosing user ~~in question~~, said data format converting means automatically converts stored data of the disclosing user ~~in question~~ into a format compatible with the type of the terminal apparatus used by the requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~ for connection to the system, the converted data being used by said terminal apparatus through which said requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~ has sent said use request, and

wherein the disclosing user ~~in question~~ can prohibit the automatic conversion of the stored data of the disclosing user ~~in question~~ into a format compatible with the type of terminal apparatus used by the requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~.

8.  (Currently Amended)        A data storage method for a plurality of terminal apparatuses of users connected with a data storage unit of a service provider via a computer network, said data storage unit storing data from inside said terminal apparatuses so that the stored data are subsequently used by said users, said data storage method comprising:

connecting said data storage unit of said service provider with one or more terminal apparatuses associated with each of said users via said computer network independently of types of said terminal apparatuses;

allocating to each one of said users a user area of a predetermined size in which to store data from inside the respective terminal apparatus of a disclosing user ~~in question~~;

managing the data being stored in each of the allocated user areas; and

automatically determining the type of terminal apparatus of a requesting user that is other than the disclosing user ~~in question~~ and for performing a data format converting process; and

announcing that the data for which use conditions have been set are usable by the users other than said disclosing user who stored data; and

intercepting the announcement from the disclosing user either in response to a request from the requesting user before said announcement, or after said announcement,

wherein, in response to a use request from ~~any user~~the requesting user other than the disclosing user ~~in question~~, said data format converting process automatically converts stored data of the disclosing user ~~in question~~ into a format compatible with the type of the terminal apparatus used by the requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~ for connection to the system, the converted data being used by said terminal apparatus through which said requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~ has sent said use request, and

wherein the disclosing user ~~in question~~ can prohibit the automatic conversion of the stored data of the disclosing user ~~in question~~ into a format compatible with the type of terminal apparatus used by the requesting user ~~other than the user in question~~.